

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 PA-01 PRS-01 ACDA-07 DODE-00

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INFO USIA WASHDC

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AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCAHREST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, HU

SUBJECT: ANOTHER EAST-WEST DISCUSSION ON HUNGARIAN TELEVISION

REF: (A) 76 BUDAPEEST 2869, (B) BUDAPEST 0089

1. CONTINUING THE SERIES OF PROGRAMS FIRST REPORTED IN 76 BUDAPEST 2869, HUNGARIAN TELEVISION SHOWED THE FORTH IN A SERIES OF EAST-WEST DISUCSSIONS ON INTERNATIONAL AFFIRS, ON PRIME-TIME TUESDAY EVENING FEBRUARY 22. THE AMERICAN PANELIST WAS DAVID BINDER OF THE NEW YORK TIMES, WHO LIKE THE OTHER TWO PARTICIPANTS, VALENTIN ZORIN OF SOVIET TELEVISION AND AGO KEICHI, BONN CORRESPONDENT OF KYODO NEWS AGENCY, WERE ALL-EXPENSES INCLUDING HORORARIUM PAID GUEST OF HUNGARIAN TELEVISION.

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2. THE PROGRAM, WHICH OFFICIALS OF HUNGARIAN TELEVISION HAVE STATED PUBLICLY IS INTENDED TO PROVIDE A TANGIBLE STEP TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION OF BASKET THREE PROVISIONS FOR THE FREER FLOW OF INFORMATION, FOCUSED ON PROSPECTS FOR 1977 IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

3. DISCUSSION FOCUSED IN LARGE PART ON NATO-WARSAW PACT MILITARY QUESTIONS, PROSPECTS FOR A SALT AGREEMENT, AND SALES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT. MENTIONED MORE BRIEFLY WERE HUMAN RIGHTS INCLUDING JEWISH EMIGRATION FROM THE SOVIET UNION, THE JACKSON-VANIK AMENDMENT AND CHARTER 77, AS WELL AS THE FAR EAST AND THE MIDDLE EAST. THE BRUNT OF DISCUSSION WAS CARRIED BY ZORIN AND BINDER, WITH OCCASIONAL COGNATE REMARKS BY HUNGARIAN MODERATOR JANOS HAJDU. THE JAPANESE PARTICIPANT, KEICHI, PLAYED A RELATIVELY MINOR ROLE.

4. BINDER'S POINTS AND ARGUMENTS WERE PHRASED WITH SUCH COURTESY, DIPLOMACY AND CIRCUMSPECTION, THAT THEY REMINDED VIEWERS MORE OF A POLISHED AND CAUTIOUS CAREER DIPLOMAT THAN OF THE AGGRESSIVE AND GO-AFTER-IT STYLE COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH AMERICAN JOURNALISTS. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES THE DISCUSSION BECAME SO GENTLE IT WAS HARD AT TIMES TO REALIZE THAT IMPORTANT OPPOSING VIEWS WERE BEING ARTICULATED.

5. IN SPITE OF THE SWEETNESS OF THE PROCEEDINGS, BINDER NEVERTHELESS STATED ARTICULATEDLY AND COGENTLY U.S. POSITIONS ON IMPORTANT FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES, AND SKILLFULLY PRESENTED IN A FAVORABLE LIGHT THE NEW CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S INITIATIVES IN THIS FIELD.

6. AT VARIOUS POINTS DURING THE DISCUSSIONS BINDER STATED THAT U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THE SEARCH FOR PEACE, THERE IS A SERIOUS DETERMINATION ON THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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U.S. SIDE TO NEGOTIATE AN EQUITABLE SALT AGREEMENT, TO REACH AN AGREEMENT ON THE PANAMA CANAL, TO MAKE PROGRESS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND TO REDUCE TENSIONS IN KOREA. BINDER POINTED OUT VERY EFFECTIVELY THAT IMPORTANT SECTORS OF U.S. PUBLIC OPINION ARE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE RAPID PACE OF SOVIET ARMS BUILD-UP, AND POSSIBLE SOVIET INTENTIONS TO ACHIEVE MILITARY SUPERIORITY. THIS IS AN AREA IN WHICH BINDER IS PARTICULARLY KNOWLEDGEABLE.

7. BINDER RAISED THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE IN VERY LOW KEY. FYI: AFTER TAPING OF PROGRAM BINDER TOLD PAO THAT HE HAD ORIGINALLY NOT INTENDED TO RAISE THE ISSUE AT ALL, AND ONLY DID SO AT THE INSTIGATION OF THE HUNGARIAN MODERATOR. END FYI. SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION, FOR WHICH ZORIN WAS OF COURSE WELL PREPARED MADE BINDER SEEM TO COME OFF SECOND BEST, BY BEING A LITTLE TOO READY TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE OTHER FELLOW HAD A POINT TOO. AT THE SAME TIME, BINDER DID STATE SPECIFICALLY THAT NOT ONLY PRESIDENT CARTER BUT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAVE A VERY STRONG COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS, THAT THEY

WILL CONTINUE TO SPEAK THEIR MINDS AND THAT AFTER HELSINKI AND THE UN DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS NO AMERICAN CONSIDERS SPEAKING HIS MIND ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO BE INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF ANOTHER COUNTRY.

8. BINDER ALSO REFERRED CONDERETELY# TO THE U.S. DESIRE THAT EMIGRATION OF SOVIET JEWS INCREASE AND THAT THIS WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE JACKSON-VANIK AMENDMENT. FINALLY, BINDER DID MENTION CHARTER 77, BUT IN SUCH AN OFFHAND MANNER THAT IT WAS A SIMPLE MATTER TO DEFLECT THE QUESTION.

9. ZORINS'S REPLIES TO BINDER'S STATEMENTS WERE ALONG EXPECTED LINES, BUT WERE ALSO CHARACTERIZED BY GREAT COURTESY AND TACT.

10. COMMENT: WHILE BINDER SCORED RELATIVELY FEW DEBATING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POINTS, FACT REMAINS THAT ONCE AGAIN HUNGARIAN TELEVISION VIEWERS HEARD AT FIRST HAND FROM AN AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE, AN ARTICULATE AND COGENT EXPOSITION OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY INCLUDING TOPICS SUCH AS ARMS REDUCTION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

NOT USUALLY ADDRESSED IN EASTERN EUROPE THROUGH THE EYES OF WESTERN OBSERVERS. AT THIS JUNCTURE, IT SEEMS HARD TO IMAGINE ANY OTHER WARSAW PACT COUNTRY SHOWING SUCH A PROGRAM ON TELEVISION. TOGETHER WITH HUNGARY'S LIGHT-HANDED APPROACH TO THE CHARTER 77 QUESTIONS, IT LENDS FURTHER SUPPORT TO THE CONTENTION THAT HUNGARY IS OUT IN FRONT AMONG WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES ON MANY ASPECTS OF HELSINKI IMPLEMENTATION AND PARTICULARLY ON BASKET THREE. END COMMENT.
MUDD

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED.

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